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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9471  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0441  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0517

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001884

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MARR](#) [GM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: GERMANY'S AFGHANISTAN MANDATES: ONE DOWN, ONE TO GO

REF: A. BERLIN 1825

[1](#)B. BERLIN 1654

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR JEFFREY RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: With the Bundestag's approval of the ISAF/Tornado mandate Oct. 12, the spotlight now shifts to the upcoming parliamentary debate and vote on the OEF mandate. While most parliamentarians now seem to accept that dropping the OEF mandate would send a very bad political signal about Germany's overall commitment to the mission in Afghanistan, one wild card is the Oct. 26-28 SPD National Party Convention, where the OEF mandate is likely to be the subject of some intense discussion. The possibility, however, of a SPD grass-roots revolt against OEF seems increasingly unlikely, as the party leadership has taken a number of steps over the last several weeks to shore up support on Afghanistan, and the party as a whole is focused on an internal debate over its direction on domestic policy. While the OEF mandate looks like it will be safely renewed in November, there continue to be a number of misperceptions about what OEF is all about and questions about how CSTC-A works. The October 22-23 visit to Berlin of Principal DAS/D for International Security Affairs Mary Beth Long and Joint Staff Deputy Director of Politico-Military Affairs Major General Bobby Wilkes offers a great opportunity to address these issues and solidify support for our Afghanistan agenda. End Summary.

ISAF/Tornado mandate in the bag  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) The Bundestag approved Oct. 12 a one-year extension of the parliamentary mandate that governs the Bundeswehr's participation in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The combined mandate, which also covers the provision of six Tornado reconnaissance aircraft, was approved with an overwhelming majority, including strong support from the opposition Free Democratic Party (FDP). The margin in favor of the combined mandate was significantly higher than it was for the Tornado mandate this past spring -- 454-79 vs. 405-157. In the spring, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) -- the junior partner in the Grand Coalition government -- had 69 defections on the Tornado vote (nearly a third of the caucus), but only 13 voted against the combined mandate this time around. Fifteen of the 51 Greens Party parliamentarians defied the decision of their September 15 national special party convention and voted in favor of the combined mandate; only seven Greens voted against the mandate, while most abstained. Most of the "no" votes came from The Left party, which opposes all overseas deployments and which voted as a solid block against the mandate.

Relief for the SPD

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¶3. (SBU) The vote represents a victory for the SPD leadership, which was highly embarrassed by the high number of dissenters when the Tornado mandate was first considered by the Bundestag in the spring. While the Tornado deployment is inherently less controversial than it was initially, the increase in support is also a direct result of the government's decision to combine the ISAF and Tornado mandates into one, eliminating the opportunity for parliamentarians to split their votes. Many of the 69 SPD parliamentarians who voted against the Tornado mandate in the spring strongly support ISAF and were not willing to sacrifice ISAF in order to express their displeasure with the Tornado deployment.

Greens defy party instructions  
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¶4. (SBU) While successful in reining in wayward SPD parliamentarians, the strategy of combining the mandates led to splits in the Green party. The party held a special party convention September 15, which decided not to support the combined mandate because of its inclusion of the Tornados. This put many Green parliamentarians in an extremely awkward position, subjecting them to criticism from other mainstream parties and accusations that the Greens were no longer a reliable potential governing party. Against that backdrop, the decision of many Green parliamentarians to vote "yes" on the combined mandate, notwithstanding a party decision to the contrary, is noteworthy. However, it remains to be seen how forgiving the Green Party rank-and-file will be with parliamentarians who failed to toe the party line.

Spotlight shifts to OEF mandate

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¶5. (C) With the ISAF/Tornado mandate out of the way, the focus now turns to the mandate governing the Bundeswehr's contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). There will be a separate Bundestag debate and vote on the OEF mandate in early November. The maritime component of the mandate, covering about 250 sailors and German frigates patrolling off the Horn of Africa, is not controversial, although some parliamentarians question why, six years after 9/11, this mission cannot be "regularized" via a UNSCR.

¶6. (C) The real bone of contention, however, remains the Afghanistan portion of the mandate, which currently provides for the deployment of up to 100 German Special Forces (KSK). Some continue to argue against renewing the OEF mandate, noting that the KSK has not been deployed to Afghanistan under OEF for more than two years, but most parliamentarians now seem to accept that dropping the OEF mandate would send a very bad political signal about Germany's overall commitment to the mission in Afghanistan. One wild card in the lead-up to next month's vote is the Oct. 26-28 SPD National Party Conference, where the OEF mandate will be the subject of intense discussion. There is a small chance that grass-roots activists could hijack the conference, as happened with the Greens, and sway a majority of conference delegates to pass a resolution opposing renewal of the OEF mandate. This, however, seems unlikely, since the SPD party organization is much more disciplined than the Greens. The SPD leadership also has taken a number of steps over the last several weeks to line up support. Further, the SPD's attention at present is focused almost exclusively on the debate over the SPD's domestic policy direction.

Continued misperceptions  
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¶7. (C) But while the OEF mandate looks like it will be safely renewed in November, there continue to be a number of

misperceptions about what OEF is all about. There remains the misperception, for example, that the bulk of civilian casualties in Afghanistan are caused in OEF operations. There is little appreciation for the fact that most OEF operations are, in fact, Afghan-led operations, and not Americans operating independently. The Germans are interested in beefing up their contribution to the training of the Afghan National Army(ANA), but have lots of questions about what the Combined Security Transition Command (CSTC-A) is doing in this regard. The October 22-23 visit to Berlin of Principal DAS/D for International Security Affairs Mary Beth Long and Joint Staff Deputy Director of Politico-Military Affairs Major General Bobby Wilkes offers a great opportunity to address these and other issues and solidify support for renewal of the OEF mandate next month.

Worried about "loose talk" on OEF-ISAF merger  
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18. (C) While there has been increasing talk here about eliminating OEF as a separate military operation in Afghanistan and having ISAF take over all residual security tasks, that is not part of the current OEF mandate debate. The government position remains that the ISAF and OEF missions are separate and distinct. Our MFA and MOD contacts have told us repeatedly that they want to avoid any "loose talk" in the coming month about a possible merger of the two missions, fearing that this will only muddy the waters for the upcoming OEF renewal debate. Once the OEF mandate is safely through, German policy-makers may be prepared to engage more constructively on this question.

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